The Declaration embraces both theory and practice, but the concrete provisions are governed by the doctrine of the opening article. Though the word liberty occurs several times, the dominant principle of this momentous pronouncement is equality of rights, and it is this principle above all which made the French Revolution a world force. It was criticized by some of the keenest intellects of the age from different standpoints but with equal severity. " The pretended rights of these theorists are all extremes/' wrote Burke ; e< and in proportion as they are metaphysically true they are morally and politically false. The rights of man are in a sort of middle, incapable of definition, but not impossible to be discerned.

Far am I from denying the real rights of man. If civil society be made for the advantage of man, all the advantages for which it is made become his right. It is an institution of beneficence; and law itself is only beneficence acting by a rule. Men have a right to live by that rule. They have a right to justice. They have a right to the fruits of their industry and to the means of making their industry fruitful. They have a right to the acquisitions of their parents ; to the nourishment and improvement to their offspring; to instruction in life and to consolation in death. Whatever each man can .separately do, without trespassing on others, he has a right to do for himself; and he has a right to a fair portion of all which society, with its combinations of skill and force, can do in his favour. In this partnership all men have equal rights, but not to equal things. He that has but five shillings in the partnership has as good a right to it as he that has five-hundred pounds. But he has not a right to an equal dividend in the product of the joint stock ; and as to the share of power which each individual

ought to have in the management of the State, that is a thing to be settled by convention."

While Burke contemptously rejected the theoretical approach to politics, Gentz, the mdst brilliant and unwearying continental opponent of the Revolution, frankly accepted the Law of Nature and the Social Contract. In an essay on the Declaration written in 1792, he hails the document as a new gospel which has already produced something 'ike a revolution in the mind of Europe, and accepts its underlying assumption.

" That man, in being born, brings with him rights of which nothing but his own will can deprive him, nobody doubts; nor that^ he only surrenders a portion of those rights on entering into society in order that the rest may-be guaranteed."